

WESTERN PEOPLE

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**JONI
MITCHELL**

WESTERN PEOPLE

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Forgetting

over springtimes of desire
we fed promise
dreamed harvests

through hot summers
built flesh and fruit

in late summer
you bend away

and apples on trees
ripen to unwanted times

in the cool freshness of fall
you dream new dreams

forgetting snows, bare limbs,
fruit recycled,
gone.

— Greta Vesterback Nelson

COVER PHOTO

Joni Mitchell at her Saskatoon art exhibition.
Photo by Michael Raine. Story, page 3.

Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome

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Dear Reader

Some people might find it curious that your humble servant, the editor of the little magazine, is also the supervisor of *The Western Producer's* web editor, but it's true.

Herewith is presented a dramatized account of the decision-making process behind this peculiar turn of events. The year is 1998:

Editor-in-chief: "The news editor already has to do 14 performance reviews a year and you only have to do five. Therefore I think the new web editor position should fall under your jurisdiction. What do you think?"

Me: "Well, I . . ."

Editor-in chief: "Good. Fine. We'll

consider it done and done. Now, leave my office, insect."

Me: "Yes, master."

The previous (and first) web editor decided after two years to move on to different-colored pastures, putting in motion that ever delightful process called the "search for a new person who will do job X while keeping a neat workstation and not advertising Nazi memorabilia on the company bulletin board."

As always, the incoming stream of résumés ran the gamut from super qualified to absolutely unqualified, with more of the latter than the former.

I have a checklist of things to look for, and look out for, when reading résumés and narrowing

the field of candidates:

1. If this résumé was spun in a centrifuge for 30 minutes, would even a drop of humor be wrung out of it?

2. If the application is signed "Beelzebub, the Dark Lord," forward it to head office. They handle executive searches.

3. Is the résumé typed or handwritten? If handwritten, does the slant of the letters indicate any disturbing psychoses?

4. What kind of paper is the résumé printed on? I usually look for a middle ground between plain white and metallic foil.

5. Did the applicant accidentally enclose a hundred-dollar bill?

Michael Gillgannon



Joni Mitchell at the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon.

From the flatlands

*Songs to aging children come
Aging children, I am one.*

—Joni Mitchell, *Clouds*, 1969.

By Sheila Robertson
Photos by Michael Raine

According to myth, the Muses, nine daughters of Zeus, were the goddesses presiding over art, poetry and music. One imagines all of them, from time to time, hovering about, whispering inspiration to Joni Mitchell.

The breadth of Mitchell's creativity is the subject of a major exhibition that opened June 30 at the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon, Sask. The multidisciplinary show, entitled *voices*, continues until Sept. 17. It brings together more than 80 of her artworks, completed over the last 32 years. Along with the visual rhythms in her canvases, the exhibition incorporates the melodies and rhythms from five of her recordings and includes displays of her lyrics.

Although Mitchell, 56, has shown her art in the United States, England and Japan, this is her first Canadian exhibition, and her first retrospective. She appeared amazed



Photo by Shelia Spence; Courtesy of the Mendel Art Gallery

when asked at a press conference prior to the exhibition opening whether she considered this event a homecoming.

"Of course it is," said the artist. Although she has a \$6-million manor in Los Angeles, her parents and boyfriend, singer Don Freed, live in Saskatoon. "I'm a flatlander. Period."

One of the reasons she chose Saskatoon as the site for her retrospective, she said, was so her parents, Bill and Myrtle Anderson, now in their 80s, could attend. In addition, "Papa Mendel" was the grandfather of one of her school chums. It was at parties at the home of Fred Mendel, meat packing magnate and founder, in 1964, of the Mendel Art Gallery and Civic Conservatory, that she was first exposed to works by Picasso, Matisse, and other great artists.

Born in Fort Macleod, Alta., Roberta Joan Anderson spent her childhood in small prairie towns before the family, including her grocer father and school teacher mom, settled in Saskatoon when she was 11. In Maidstone, where she lived from ages three to five, "the grain elevators were our skyscrapers."

From an early age, Mitchell exhibited a passion for art and music. She took piano briefly, but balked at the discipline. She wanted to do her own thing. Similarly, she was more interested in

*40 BELOW 0, 1995,
OIL ON LINEN, 28 X 32 IN.
COLLECTION OF THE
ARTIST.*

drawing than studying while in high school at Aden Bowman Collegiate.

She was still a teenager when she began singing at coffeehouses. At first, the music was a means to an end, a way to buy cigarettes and, for a brief period, to survive as an art student. But it was the music that took off first, with her self-named debut album in 1968.

Mitchell has since had 20 more releases, including the recent *Both Sides Now*, the cover art for which is in the Mendel exhibition. She has won two Grammy awards, Billboard Magazine's Century Award and a Governor General's award. In 1997, she was inducted into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame.

While these honors celebrate her music, Mitchell maintains she is an artist first. In the 1970s, as a touring musician, she made pictures in felt markers of friends like Judy Collins, Neil Young and James Taylor. Prints of some of these images, which have a great deal of energy and charm, are in the retrospective. It is the first time

they've been exhibited.

At the press conference, Mitchell recalled she was all set to take lessons from Ernest Lindner, a noted Saskatoon landscape and figurative artist, when she was 13. "But he was on sabbatical that year, so I ended up with Henry Bonli."

Bonli was a devotee of Barnett Newman and other New York abstract expressionists. Although Mitchell wasn't impressed at the time, decades later she went through a long period of making abstract paintings, with many different tools, including a rolling pin.

Her recent paintings situate figures in the landscape. Mostly she does self-portraits, which are useful for album covers. She also paints her friends and her cats.

Among the portraits is an homage to a mentor, jazz bass player Charles Mingus, whom she visited in Mexico shortly before his death in 1979. The acrylic painting depicts him from the back, hunching in his wheelchair, contemplating a glorious tropical garden.

"He said to me one time, 'Why does everything have to be ugly or beautiful? Why can't it just be pretty?'"

"Yeah," Mitchell reflected, puffing her cigarette in the officially smoke-free art gallery, "I like pretty things too."

As is often the case with celebrity art,

Mitchell's exhibitions have received mixed reviews. There were some untoward comments in a guest book accompanying a show she had at Canada House, in London, she admitted.

"Some people wrote things like, 'Don't give up your straight job,' and 'Thanks for the amusement.'"

But she said she believed some of her works have merit and deserve to be shown. "I'm taking a break from song-writing, but I have hundreds of paintings I want to do."

A series of photographs in the exhibition documents a sentimental journey she made in 1986, with her then husband, musician Larry Klein. (Her earlier marriage to folk singer Chuck Mitchell was brief.) They began the trip in Calgary, where she'd spent a year—

appears transparent, a canvas for the vast western skies.

Gilles Hebert, the director of the Mendel gallery and the man who organized *voices*, was fascinated by the link between a cultural icon and an isolated landscape.

Over the years, Mitchell has frequently returned to her home in Saskatoon to reconnect with the prairie "and she has drawn from these pilgrimages," Hebert says in his catalogue statement.

For example, *40 Below 0*, a 1995 oil painting included in the show, was inspired by a drive in the country near Prince Albert in mid-winter. She took a photo of a just-plowed lane leading to a farmyard and, on returning to the stu-

don" clearly don't allude to Los Angeles.

The identification with the rural, Western Canadian experience is even more striking in *Song for Sharon*, from the 1976 recording, *Hejira*. Here she recalls going to every wedding in Maidstone, to see "the pretty lady in the white lace wedding gown."

It is perhaps her honesty as well as her gift for poetry that have impressed her legion of fans. Those who frequent the official Joni Mitchell website, at jonimitchell.com, exchange information on practically every move the star makes. It was there many of them learned about her retrospective at the Mendel gallery. As a result, fans flocked to Saskatoon for the opening from as far away as California and Minnesota.

Steven Goetz, a 44-year-old waiter



the extent of her formal training in art—at the Alberta College of Art.

From there, they traced the path the Anderson family had taken to progressively larger centres: from Fort Macleod to Maidstone, North Battleford and Saskatoon. While taking slides of the trip, Mitchell accidentally double exposed a roll. She began playing with the images one night when she couldn't sleep and was pleased with the portraits of herself and Klein layered over grassland, grain fields and small-town landmarks.

"The lamination of the self-portraits to these nostalgic images of wheat and barns and elevators gave me great personal excitement," she says in an essay for the exhibition catalogue.

She then made a number of these layered compositions deliberately. In them, Mitchell's rather ghostly, solemn image

dio in her pink stucco home in Bel Air, she poured her impressions out onto the canvas.

A more abstract rendering of the prairie is found in a long, narrow acrylic painting that evokes the endless horizon. The Road to Uncle Lyle's #1 features the elongated tailfin of a white car and patchwork-like reflections of the yellow line of the blacktop, highway signs and a wheat field.

Mitchell said her paintings often reflect changing situations. The storm clouds seen hovering in *The Road to Uncle Lyle's* dumped hail and flattened the crop. Elsewhere, a snowy scene captures a moment shortly before an avalanche.

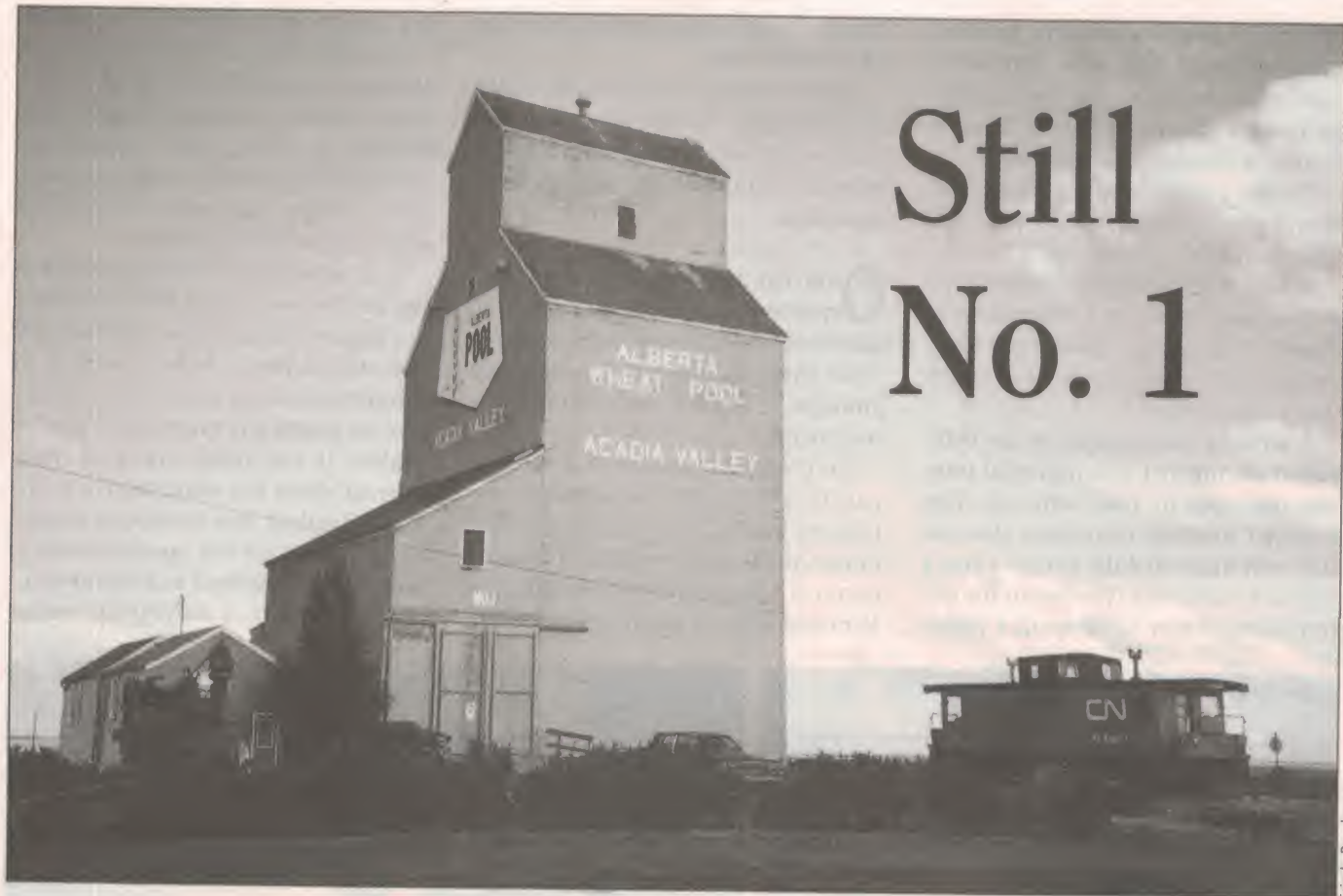
Mitchell has often referred to her roots in her lyrics as well. Phrases like "I wish I had a river / I could skate away

who lives near Sydney, Australia, would love to have come, too. In an interview via e-mail, he described himself as "Joni's biggest fan." Her music has had a huge impact on him, he said. "She has touched me in so many ways."

Goetz recalls talking with Mitchell in New York in the mid-1980s, when she came to a restaurant where he was working. "She had dinner with an old friend that night, and she told me he taught her how to paint. They both proceeded to draw all night on the tablecloth."

On leaving, Mitchell apologized to the owner for ruining the tablecloth, but Goetz assured her he would take it home and hang it up in his apartment.

He's carried that tablecloth with him ever since and it's still on his wall, he said. "Even though it isn't signed, it's worth more than anything I own." ■



Frieda Brockmann

ALBERTA WHEAT POOL ELEVATOR NO. 1 AT ACADIA VALLEY IS NOW A MUSEUM, TEA ROOM AND GIFT SHOP

By Frieda Brockmann

Towering 101 feet high against the skyline, an Alberta Wheat Pool elevator stands surrounded by flat to slightly rolling prairie stretching to the horizon. It is situated at Acadia Valley, 30 miles south of Oyen beside Highway 41, and is the only skyscraper in town.

The original elevator on the site opened in 1928, and burned down, along with its annexes, in 1967. The following year, the new facility was built. It retained the style of its predecessor, and was typical of the elevators that sprouted up like mushrooms across the Prairies in pioneer days. It remained in operation until rail abandonment in Acadia Valley in 1989.

Though still functional, elevators all over the country continue to close. "Rail line abandonment and elevator closures are today's reality," stated the summer 1999 issue of Agricore members' newsletter, *Common Ground*. It fur-

ther predicted, "Within two years, it's estimated that 70 percent of all Western Canadian grain will move through fewer than 300 elevators."

"We have to close some of our smaller elevators to ensure that grain flows to the new facilities," Agricore president Charlie Swanson explains in the same newsletter.

After the first of their three elevators was demolished, members of the Acadia Valley community wanted to save at least one from the fate of other wooden, country elevators after closure. Tossing around various ideas and possibilities, townspeople settled on a prairie museum with a grain handling theme.

Thus, the Prairie Elevator Association of Acadia Valley formed. It approached the Alberta Wheat Pool and was able to purchase the elevator for a dollar.

The next hurdle was that the elevator site belonged to the CNR. The new association had no money so, armed with a petition, it solicited assistance

from the Municipal District. After reviewing the evidence of sufficient community interest needed for a successful project, the district bought the land and remains supportive.

"It's fortunate the MD owns the property," said Ron Ibach, a founding member of the elevator association. "They still keep it insured."

Hours, days and weeks of volunteer work readied the premises and achieved the desired results. The elevator maintained its body and soul but exemplified a new purpose by opening day, June 28, 1991.

"Though old in style, the actual building was in good condition with no major renovation needed," said Pat Kuhn, another association member. Everything in the elevator, including the scale, the lift and automatic doors is in working order.

As the museum took shape, the Grain Academy in Calgary helped with ideas and contributed a video showing the steps of grain handling in a rural

elevator. The tape is a feature of guided tours through the museum, that is loaded with antiques and items of historical significance.

The true "elevator smell" clings to the structure, lending authenticity, but without the grain dust and chaff dancing in the air, clearly remembered by anyone who has hauled grain.

Since this elevator was built after 1965, it was too new to qualify as a historical site, eligible for government funding for maintenance. The elevator association took on this responsibility, organizing two fundraisers a year, a fall turkey supper and a spring fashion show.

"The community is good about supporting these functions," said Kuhn. Individual voluntary contributions are also helpful. Some local organizations and those in surrounding communities give donations, too.

"At first we thought we'd just conduct the odd tour with a cup of coffee," said Kuhn. The plan snowballed.

The museum operation relied on volunteer work during the first two years. Since then, two paid employees keep everything running smoothly and hire student help.

This summer sees the elevator in its 9th year of renaissance. It is open week-

ends from the May long weekend until July 1st., then daily until the end of August. Then it's back to weekends only again, until Thanksgiving. Visiting hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tours may also be arranged through members of the elevator association.

Visitors can relax and sample baked items, coffee, tea or juice, served in the adjoining tea room. This former elevator office from nearby Duchess was bought and moved to the site in 1998. Ory Skappak, Clayton Scheuerman and Ibach renovated and refurbished the building to create the tea room and gift shop. The latter carries souvenirs unique to the prairies, including wheat weavings and scenes of elevators, fashioned from straw.

On the wall is a large world map dotted with colored pin heads. They represent the home towns of visitors, of which the elevator sees as many as 1,200 a year. They've come from South Africa, China, Japan, New Zealand, parts of Europe.

As a result, the locals who like to meet at the elevator for coffee often get to mingle with travellers from afar.

"It's all worthwhile when you get positive comments from tourists," Kuhn said. Often, those signing the

guest book will make remarks such as "Thanks for keeping our heritage."

Occasionally, the visitors themselves are memorable. There was the group of 196 Girl Guides. Kuhn also remembers two couples on motorbikes who arrived in a downpour. "They drove right into the elevator on their bikes."

The elevator grounds provide a resting place for some relics of the pioneer era: an antique Acadia Valley fire truck, a fuel delivery wagon, a threshing machine and various other machines. One special acquisition, in 1995, was a caboose from Edmonton. Refurbishing it required two trips to Selkirk, Man., for salvage parts. Cleaning and restoring it presented a large undertaking, but it opened for viewing the next season. The members of the association are proud of their caboose. There's talk, now, of acquiring a boxcar.

Association president, Sussi White, mentions another idea. "We'd like to have a display to show the different grains and how they grow." In addition, the National Film Board has expressed interest in doing a documentary on the elevator.

Visitors find the elevator a way to become acquainted with the Prairies and the pioneers. They are usually impressed. ■■

Never judge a day till it's over

Memory by Ken Hodgins

I worked with a big old stringbean of a Swede called Crowbar in Churchill, Man. Everybody liked this guy; he had a great attitude. He acted like every day could be the best day of his life. It helps to make life worth living, and he always went out of his way to make it exciting.

One night, Crowbar and I were standing out in the street, and it was black as pitch and we pretty well agreed it hadn't been much of a day for either one of us. All of a sudden, the front door of a house flew open and a big, red-headed fellow dragged out a much smaller fellow, kicking and scratching, and booted him into the street.

I was impressed by the little guy. He was getting the worst of it, but he was getting his licks in, too. As busy as he was, he kept yelling, "You can't do this to me!"

But the big guy did, and then he stomped back inside and slammed the door.

It should have been all over then and there, but my friend, the nimble-minded Swede, picked up a rock about the size of a big fist and flung it through the front window as hard as he could heave it.

The door opened again and the big guy came out, looking a little cautious. This gave the little guy an opportunity to be heard.

"You can't throw me out of there—

that's my house," he said.

"Well, great balls of fire," said the big guy. "I forgot where I was. Why didn't you say so? Come on in, welcome home. Knock a little dust off your clothes before you come in."

I've never forgotten what Crowbar told me, as we stumbled back to the bunkhouse. "Never judge a day till it's over," he said. "And always keep your eye out for bad luck, and try to head her off before she gets too close."

(Hodgins, who was raised on a grain farm near Mont Nebo, Sask., worked as a grain handler for the government elevator in Churchill, Man., in the late 1950s and early 1960s. A retired farmer, he writes from Saskatoon.)

D

is for
difference,
as in, it makes
a difference

By Darlene Polachic

The young athletes that participate in the Saskatchewan Command Royal Canadian Legion Track and Field Camp, held each July in Saskatoon, are not necessarily the best in their club or school. They are the ones who love a particular sport and want advanced coaching in it, says camp director Rod Scriven.

"Eighty percent of the athletes come from small-town Saskatchewan," he says. "We have kids here literally from across the province.

"Some come with the goal of doing the best they can; some have the goal of doing well enough to be selected to go on to the national competition."

Although this is not a medal-earning competition, there are clear winners, Scriven notes. "At the end of the week, the top-placing athletes are picked to go on to the national camp which will be held in Calgary this year. Thirty-seven athletes, three coaches, and four chaperones will go from Saskatchewan."

The week-long track and field camp is an annual event sponsored by the Royal Canadian Legion. Originally, it was established under the joint sponsorship of the federal government and



Ron Scriven, Legion track and field camp director, farms near Abbey, Sask.

the Dominion Command of the Royal Canadian Legion to promote physical fitness in as many high school students as possible. Provincial Legion commands eventually began holding their own events.

The first Legion track and field camp in Saskatchewan was held in 1966 at Dundurn military camp. Over the years the event moved to St. Peter's Abbey in Muenster to Notre Dame College at Wilcox to Luther College in Regina. In 1981, it moved to Griffiths Stadium on the University of Saskatchewan cam-

pus, where it remains.

Attendance has fluctuated. Nearly 400 athletes took part in 1969. This year there were 76 girls and 60 boys.

Leading up to camp, the Legion sends posters and material to local branches that publicize the event at schools and track clubs throughout the province.

Scriven says the meet, run entirely by volunteers, encompasses all the regular track and field events and provides a full slate of coaches who give training sessions in every event to help the

young athletes improve their skills and performance.

Scriven, a grain and cattle farmer near Abbey, Sask., has been involved with the Legion camp since 1994, when he and his wife Edna applied to be chaperones at the provincial event that year. A long-time Legion member and a former sports coach himself, he took over as assistant director of the provincial camp in 1997 and this year became its director.

Athletes attend the camp at no cost. The Legion underwrites everything, and also pays the travel expenses and room and board of the athletes selected to go on to the nationals.

The Legion also puts on an elaborate opening ceremony with color party and full Legion ritual. Three male and three female chaperones also come from local Legions and Ladies Auxiliaries across the province.

Doug Warren, formerly of Radville, Sask., and now a resident of Saskatoon, has been a chaperone for 34 years. "I started the very first year it was held in Saskatchewan," he says. "I've been interested in track all my life. To me, the best thing any boy or girl could do is get into athletics. And this camp pushes them forward, makes them a lot better. When we were kids, we did all our own training. We had no coaches. We didn't know if we were any good at all because we had nothing to compare ourselves to."

Warren ticks off on his fingers former camp participants who have gone on to successful sports careers: Tanya Lypka of Balcarres and Mark Lowe of Kyle, medalists in the 1993 Jeux Canada Games; Seema Kamal of Saskatoon, 1992 Canadian Championships; Ladonna Antoine of Regina, 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, 1995 Japan World Student Games, 1993 Jeux Canada Games; Cyprian Enweani of Saskatoon, national sprint team member, ninth in the Seoul Olympics; and Stuart McKeown of Cut Knife, silver and bronze medal winner in shot put and discus at the Seoul Paralympics.

Athletes may return to the Legion track and field camp for four years. Many do. Emery Tuplin is one of the many people who also come back to coach. A decathlon athlete from Beechy, he began coming to camp

because it was something to do in the summer.

"I had a lot of fun," he recalls, "and the camps helped improve my ability. I got to be better and better, and made the national team . . . went to Ottawa for the nationals. I was a kid from the farm coming to the city. It was all new to me. Not a lot of kids who come from little towns do well. The Legion Track and Field Camp gives them the opportunity to see their potential."

Tuplin's experience at the camp

coaching because of all I learned from coaches at Legion camps. This is my way of putting back into the sport. I take one week out of my training to do this because it's important. It makes an impact on kids from small towns. It gives them encouragement. It makes a difference."

The athletes themselves have high praise for the camp. Lee Wolfater from Tompkins is an energetic heptathlete who likes all the events. "I'm here for my fourth year because it's a fun



Darlene Polachic

Lee Wolfater from Tompkins crouches in readiness for a sprint.

encouraged him to "give track and field his best shot and excel in it." In 1996, he was Canadian National Junior Decathlon champion in the 19 years and under category.

After nearly quitting because of injuries, he decided to give it one more try. As a university student, he competed with the U of S Husky track team in indoor pentathlon in 1999 and placed third at the Canadian Intervarsity Athletic Union competitions. This year, as a member of the Husky men's four by four relay team, he ran the second fastest indoor four by four in CIAU history. The weekend before he came to coach at the Legion 2000 Camp, Tuplin competed in the Canadian National Combined Events Jamboree and placed first with a score of 7,091 points, just nine points off the Netherlands standard set in the Dutch vs Canada Duel.

"Why am I coaching here? I'm

camp," he says. "You meet lots of people, and you get good help with your track skills. There are great coaches, great chaperones, and great instruction. I want to continue doing this at university."

Ralph Campbell from Beauval was also enjoying himself. "I love it," the decathlon participant declares. "I'm here because I'd heard about the track and field camp, and I like to try new things."

Tal Campbell, a shot put and discus specialist also from Beauval, agrees. "I came because I'm good in my events, and because I had the support of my family. Being here gives you a knowledge of the competition which is helpful if you're going to head down the line with your sport. I'm having lots of fun, trying out and competing against other people, and getting great tips from the coaches. It's excellent stuff." ■

Just me and my floppy

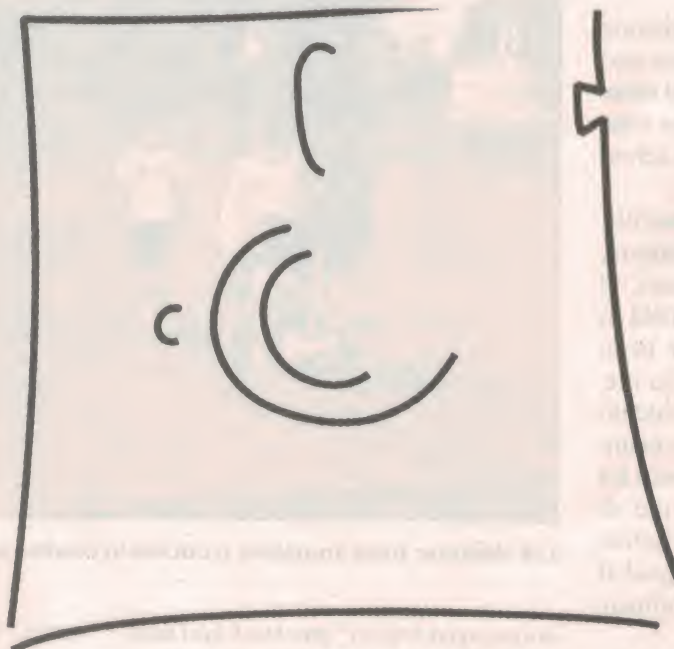
Humor by
Shelley Leedahl

I am a technophobe, with a deep-seated fear of all things technological. Microwaves. VCRs. Watches that stop and start the red numerals of time. I don't like 'em, rarely use 'em.

My first book, a collection of poems, was written on a typewriter in my laundry room. The typewriter, a high school graduation gift, was electric. I thought it was high-tech.

Soon enough I began writing stories, and I could see the advantage of working on a computer — or, as people liked to euphemistically say — a word processor, especially where cutting and pasting were concerned. Twenty-eight hundred dollars later, (thanks, Dad) I converted. And yes, it was a time saver, a blessing, a veritable godsend. I thought we'd be friends forever.

From 1989 to late 1998, that old Hewitt Rand served me well. There was no mouse, a 5¼ inch disk drive, and the only game I had on it was Yahtzee. Now



everyone's talking Internet, the world-wide web, e-mail. Even the venerable CBC radio refers to Canada Post's delivery as "snail mail." It was really getting my goat. But Mr. Hewitt Rand was aging: his screen faded in and out like a very slow strobe, his enter key stuck, people laughed at his 5¼ inches. I feared his days were numbered.

Then, when my fifth manuscript was accepted for publication, the publisher mentioned, "We'll want that on disk, Microsoft Word for Windows 6." Our future discussions, and possibly even the editing process, were to take place via e-mail.

"Right," I said, "I'll get right on that." Still, I balked.

Pressure was all around me. The kids wanted to be able to e-mail their friends

and talk to total strangers—possibly even perverts!—on chatlines. They wanted cool new games and, oh yeah, there was also something about research and writing school reports.

My husband talked about how beneficial it would be for my writing. How great it would be to connect with someone in China or Austria. He didn't say a thing about all the hockey pools he could enter, or all the dumb and dirty jokes his friends would e-mail him.

Finally, one grey December day, I could take their hounding no more. It was off to Staples, with an excited family. They already knew what to buy. As the sales clerk went through the innumerable options, I wished for a simpler time, and I felt my body go numb.

"Home," I said to my husband. "Take me home."

He obliged, but not before I signed my name to the bottom of a cheque and handed it to him. He went back.

For the computer — and for the kids.

I cried for Hewitt Rand. I cried for my KX-P1124 dot matrix printer. I cried for me. For a mere \$3,400, I had joined the rest of the world. I could have bought a car with that money. I could have moved to Italy.

I was furious with the new computer. I had to learn a new language. These fingers that had only ever typed commands now had to master the dexterity to control a mouse. I hate mice! I refused to connect to the Web until I could at least remember what to do with the zip drive. The unused scanner sat in the corner of my office, haunting, taunting. I loathed the entire system. And get this: it didn't even work. Printer one was a dud. Printer two: same story. And in a process called "defragmenting," my husband essentially lost my last nine years of work. Now I knew about Computer Rage.

"Kill the beast!" I yelled, like a priestess exorcising a demon. And downstairs, gone from my office but never from my heart, sat Mr. Hewitt Rand. In our nine years together, I had never once backed anything up, and never lost so much as a paragraph.

And then this. Printer four worked. "And look at all this cool stuff," my husband said. He was trembling. Trips to Staples do this to him. "It prints super fast, even does photos. And check out these new programs! With ViaVoice, you don't even have to type anymore."

What? Now he had my attention.

Viavoice. An automatic speech recognizer, or ASR, for short. Theoretically, you can use your voice instead of a keyboard by talking into a microphone connected to your computer. First, your computer must be trained to your voice. For this you read about five thousand phrases.

Well, when I tried to put this thing into practice, I found out just how much of a timesaver ViaVoice really was. Let me demonstrate. This is the first paragraph of my book, *The Bone Talker*:

"Not so very long ago or far away lived an old woman whose life had wound down like a clock. Gone were the tick and tock of her youth when she'd steered a raft down a roaring river

and climbed the long arms of the trees. Now she creaked when she hobbled across the room. She felt the passing of many seasons in her knees and stopped marking the moons since her hair spun into a white mist."

And here's the ViaVoice massacre of *The Boat Darker*:

"Not so very long ago or far away as to the old woman whose wife had long as a bloody glove, with the tick and talk of it would she like Texaco? I'd done this is where it's fun you my mother might care giver and life my days are spent fewer fatalities will be in the area of low but never abandon hope that the decline of an investment world to 3,053 day filled with love. The passing of many seasons attorneys and stock market moods since recent fare spine she preached which he hauled across the room. Ballard said the figure."

In March we called the cable company and got connected to the Internet. Again, I was timid. I didn't know how to surf. I signed up for listservs and "listened" on chatlines without having the nerve to contribute. Then one day, while revising my novel, a light suddenly flashed and I discovered what the computer and all this technology is really good for: procrastinating. Stuck on a line? Check your e-mail. Can't stay focused? Surf.

Sometimes this is done deliberately, sometimes it's one thing leading to another. For instance, a character in a story of mine had the radio on and "Dust in the Wind" was playing. I needed to find out when the song was recorded, so I hit the web. Well, not only did I find the year it was produced, but I also found the lyrics, and a site that played the tune but not the words, so you can sing along, and sing along I did. About nine times. This linked to a page with the guitar chords, so guess who's off and running to get her acoustic? Guess who's not writing a word?

Other times, I've been searching for something and I end up

looking at the personal web page of someone from South Carolina, complete with photos of her cats and the basket of flowers her parents gave her for grad.

Round and round and round you go, where you'll stop. . . . By accident, I once almost e-mailed Xaviera Hollander (author of *The Happy Hooker*)! And have you ever noticed how certain trivia can become all-important and all-consuming when you're supposed to be writing? I was wondering about old television shows and got thinking about the series "Family Affair." There are actually discussion boards about these kinds of things, and on one someone mentioned something about the actress who played Buffy, the pigtailed little girl on the show, who always dragged around that bespectacled doll, Mrs. Beasley. It seemed Buffy had died. Well, suddenly it became crucial that I find out what had happened to her! I spent a good three hours that day — time I could have spent revising, submitting, creating — trying to find out how poor Buffy had met her demise.

Admittedly, technology has helped when I've needed information on hanta virus and Lou Gehrig's disease, or required photos of Ricky Martin (research). I can discover new markets, read up on other authors, and get rejected 10 times as quickly.

Technology. I love to hate it, have to love it. After all, how else would I ever have learned the truth about Buffy Davis? She died August 29, 1976, in Oceanside, Calif., of a drug overdose. Just what I needed to know. ■



RECENT BIRD SIGHTINGS

Column No. 1,586

By Doug Gilroy

My picture today features a yellow-headed blackbird, a bird that can often be found alongside our lakes, sloughs and roadside ponds. It has a very odd and harsh song.



You wouldn't call it musical at all. Unlike other blackbirds, the yellow-head will not build its nest in bushes and will not nest over dry land. These birds prefer to nest in rushes and reeds over water.

According to the bird guides, the yellow-headed blackbird is found in southern Saskatchewan, Manitoba and throughout most of Alberta. When one first sees one, it resembles nothing so much as a blackbird with a big dandelion atop its body. The female lacks the yellow head but does sport a yellow patch on the throat and yellow patch on the head to separate it as a species from other blackbirds.

Strangely, although the yellow-headed blackbird is common, I have yet to see one in

**Yellow-headed
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most of Alberta.**

my area this year. How are the numbers in your area?

Elmer Wium of Tappen, B.C., has sent along a response to my recent column about swallows. He says violet-green swallows are prevalent in his region. However, due to the cooler weather, they arrived later this spring than they have

other years.

The tree swallow arrived back two weeks later than the olive-backed and Wium has seen two pairs nesting.

He also had a mallard duck nesting in the yard, but a crow got it. He mentions scattering hen scratch over the yard for the doves but the ducks seem to enjoy it as much as the doves, along with seeds scratched out from the bird feeder.

Wium has seen juncos wintering there in impressive numbers for the last two years. The nuthatch and the chickadee who took over the tree swallows' nest box enjoy fresh ground peanuts and the downy woodpecker and her young seem to like the suet he has hanging in the trees.

He says only small birds are supposed to get into the peanut feeder but, inevitably, some larger ones try to squeeze in too.

He had a robin nesting in what he thought was a safe place when she chose the top step of a ladder placed against the wall under cover along with other yard tools, but a smart crow found it and of course killed the half-grown young.

Lillian Chase of Arborfield, Sask., sent in a clipping from a magazine which featured a picture of a yellow-rumped warbler. She says she saw one in her apple tree and wonders if we ever saw one at Last Mountain Lake.

Yes, I have seen them. Here we call them myrtle warblers. This is a sub-species to the one featured in the clipping, which has a yellow throat. Our myrtle warbler has a white throat but like the other one it has a yellow rump patch.

It is odd that Mother Nature makes two birds the same but different, one living in western places like Oregon and the other here in more eastern parts of the continent. ■



How to
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KiDSPiN co-ordinator: Michelle Houlden

The Kids' Help Phone is free, it's confidential, and it's 24 hours a day. A friend is always on the other end of the line.

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My Teeth

*Courtney Wall, 8
Estevan, Sask.*

My teeth are such a problem,
My teeth are such a pain.
My teeth really do bother me,
They are driving me insane!

My teeth really do bug me
I'll be glad to hear them say,
"It's time to take your
braces off."
Hip, hip, hip hooray!

I cannot eat the foods
I really like to eat.
All my food is really gross
When I sit down at my seat.

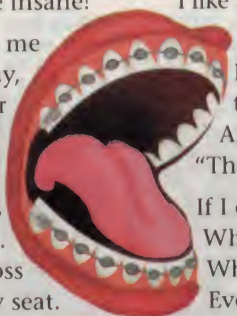
Cooked carrots, peas, and potatoes,
How gross those foods can be!
They're the worst thing I've ever tasted.
Why can't you just let me be?

My teeth are such a problem,
I don't like them anymore.
And just to tell the truth, I think
I like them the way they were before!

But if I don't get braces,
I'll have the worst teeth in
the school,
And then everyone will say,
"That girl is such a fool!"

If I don't get braces,
When I smile you will see
When people want to take pictures,
Everyone will laugh at me!

Someday my smile will sparkle,
like the stars and all beneath,
Just because my orthodontist
Put braces on my teeth!



*Brandon Combres, 8
Richard, Sask.*

Pen Pals

Hi! My name is Stephanie Joaquin. I am 9 and want a boy or girl penpal. Will answer all letters. My hobbies are horseback riding, gymkana, sports and reading. R.R. 3, Box 23, Bouchie Site, Quesnel, B.C. V2J 3H7.

Hi! My name is Kaitlin Reade. I like watching Pokémon and playing hockey, basketball, skating and skiing. I would like a penpal ages 8-11. I am 9. If interested, write to Box 141, Cando, Sask. S0K 0V0.

Hi! I am 15 and would like a penpal aged 14-18. My interests include writing, reading, sports, music and driving. I will respond to all letters. Write to Arlynda Braim, RR#2, New Norway, Alta., T0B 3L0.

Hi, I am 11 and want a penpal aged 10-12, male or female. I like reading, soccer, music, TV and animals. Write to Nicole Braim, RR#2, New Norway, Alta., T0B 3L0.

Hi, my name is Kimberly Kossowan. I'm 13 and enjoy camping, swimming, rollerblading and pets. I would like a girl or boy penpal ages 12-15. I will always write back. Box 234, Glendon, Alta., T0A 1P0.

Seeking penpals aged 15-18. I am taking distance education and want to meet penpals interested in writing. Tiffany Doyle, Box 1543, Fort Macleod, Alta., T0L 0Z0.

KiDSPiN inventor contest

Do you have some great original invention brewing in your brain, something that would make life around the farm a whole lot easier? Submit a brief description (under 200 words) telling us how your invention would work along with a picture drawn on plain white paper. (Please, don't send in an idea for something that already exists. Make something up, the more fantastic, the better.)

All entries must be received in our office by Sept. 15 and must include your full name, age, mailing address and a daytime telephone number on the back. Entries cannot be returned. Send your entries to KiDSPiN's Inventor Contest (our addresses are at the top of this page.) T-shirts and book prizes go to the most inventive in age categories 5-8, 9-11, 12-14 and 15-18. Good luck!

PEANUTS Classics



RURAL ROOTZ



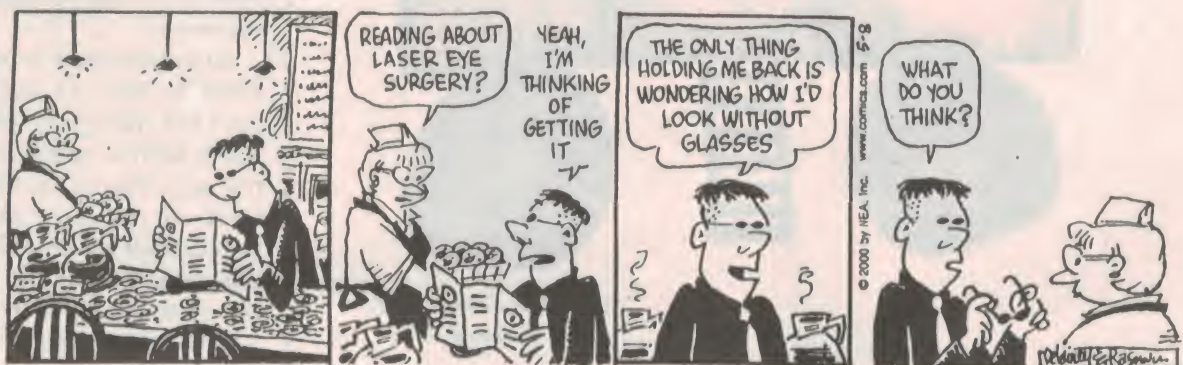
For BETTER or for WORSE



GARFIELD

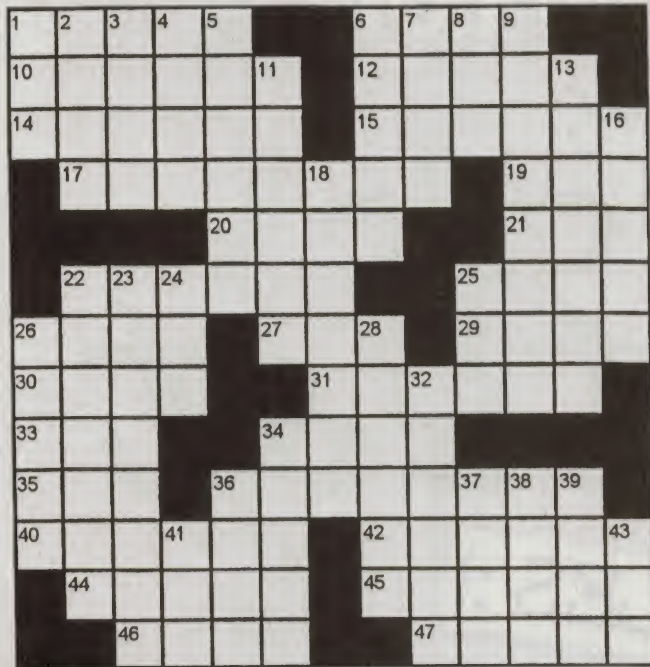


BETTY



Canadian Criss Cross

by Walter D. Feener

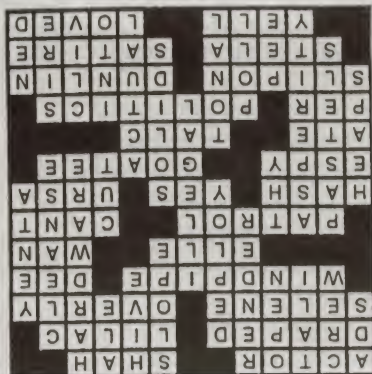


ACROSS

1. Tragedian
6. Iranian ruler's title
10. Fell in folds
12. Purple flower
14. Sister of Helios
15. Too much
17. Trachea
19. Roman numeral for 500
20. Model MacPherson
21. Sickly pale
22. Traverse as a guard
25. Beggars' whining
26. Gallimaufry
27. Agreeable answer
29. ___ Minor
30. Catch sight of
31. Pointed beard
33. Dined
34. Magnesium silicate
35. By means of
36. Science of government
40. Laceless shoe
42. Sandpiper
44. Stone pillar
45. Caricature
46. Scream
47. Took pleasure in

DOWN

1. TV commercials
2. Ship's company
3. Anklebones
4. Closed, but unlocked
5. Clarify by melting
6. Incline
7. Honey store
8. Porter
9. Locks, hinges, and screws
11. Spread out troops
13. Purge
16. Woman gossip
18. Against the law
22. Crayon drawings
23. Roughness
24. "The Lord's Prayer" word
25. Slash
26. Old autos
28. Three dimensional figures
32. Now existing
34. Phonic
36. Collection of votes
37. Division word
38. 154 in Rome
39. Forefather
41. 16th letter
43. "___ Kelly" (Jagger movie)



MAILBOX

Listings are free but only run once. Please be brief. Issues are prepared three weeks in advance of publication date. Send info to: Mailbox, Western People, Box 2500, Saskatoon S7K 2C4.

Searching for brother and sister adopted out in 1980s — Jessie James Erickson, born April 20, 1980 and Holly Ann Erickson, born Dec. 26, 1982, born in Humboldt, Sask. Names may be changed. Please contact: Kelly Erickson, Box 143, Annaheim, Sask. S0K 0G0, 306-598-2008.

Have a limited number of Brooke Bond cards: Series 10, transportation: 3-7, 9, 11, 12, 17, 19-22, 26-30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 38, 39, 41-48; Series 11, trees: 3, 17, 21, 26, 33, 40, 6, 7, 19, 24, 28, 37; Series 12, space age: 4, 33, 45; Series 13, wildlife in danger: 5, 20, 25, 36, 10, 21, 30; Series 14, exploring the ocean: 19, 27, 35, 38, 42. Please send SASE for the numbers you want to: Box 584, Souris, Man. R0K 2C0.

Lomond and district history book, 919 pages. \$25 each plus \$6 shipping or two books for \$45. Make cheque payable to Lomond Drop-In, Box 53, Lomond, Alta. T0L 1G0.

Newdale Community Historical Society will be publishing an updated history book for Newdale and area. Completion date: November 2000. July 22 and 23 Newdale Millennium Celebrations. Advance tickets required for supper. For more information, 204-849-2083.

Belbutte homecoming, Aug. 12-13, 2000. Registration begins 1 p.m. Aug. 12. Events include entertainment, recreation and socializing. Potluck supper 6 p.m. followed by music and dancing. Pancake breakfast 9-11 a.m. Sunday followed by talent show. This is your invitation to attend. Contact: Marion, 306-883-2697 or Lillian, 306-883-2646.

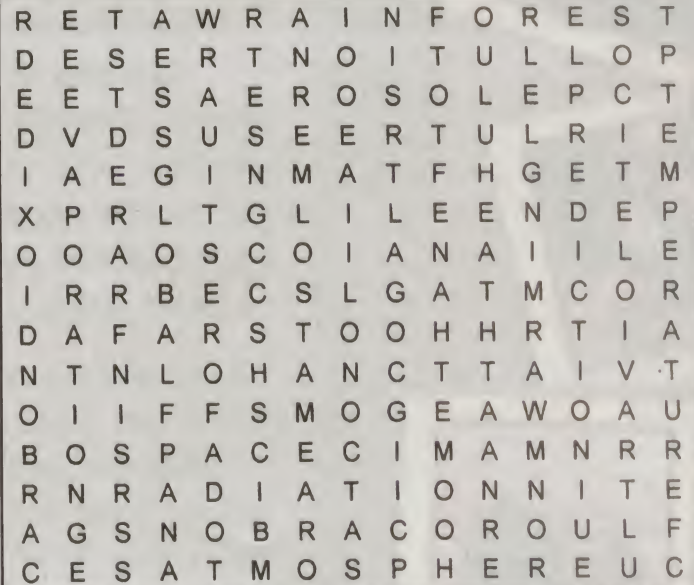
History Book 2000. Present and past residents of the Kyle, White Bear, Sanctuary, Tuberosa and Sask. Landing areas, submit new and/or updated family and community histories to: History Book Committee 2000, Box 96, Kyle, Sask. S0L 1T0, fax 306-375-2999, e-mail: newbtob@hotmail.com. Deadline: Sept. 1, 2000.

Glenbush School reunion, June 30-July 1, 2001. Looking for following student addresses: Carmine Bartholomew '47, Dianne Baer '65, Doreen Day '61, Elsie Hoffman '53, Stephen Holderness '75, Joyce Laroque '73, Joan Richardson '74, Rudy Schneider '61, Douglas Stadnyk '70, Dalfis Whitecap '72. Anyone knowing the whereabouts contact: Wilma Isaak, Box 81, Medstead, Sask. S0M 1W0, 306-342-4211.

GREENHOUSE EFFECT

Word Find puzzle
by Janice M. Peterson

When all the words in the list have been found, the letters left over will spell the solution.



Aerosol
Atmosphere
Carbon Dioxide
Climatologist
Desert
Evaporation
Fluorocarbons
Forest
Fossil Fuels
Global
Health

Heat
Infrared
Ice Caps
Methane
Ocean
Pollution
Prediction
Radiation
Rainforest
Smog
Sunlight

Temperature
Trees
Ultraviolet
Warming
Water

Solution
(15 letters):

Climate
changes

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WESTERN PEOPLE Photo Contest

THE RULES:

TO ENTER:

We're looking for photos that highlight the people of Western Canada. Therefore, one or more people must be prominent in your entries.

There will be a \$1,000 top prize, \$500 for 2nd place, \$250 for 3rd place, \$150 for 4th place and \$100 for 5th.

Winners will be announced in October and their photos featured in Western People

Enter today!

× Photos must be recent (taken between Jan. '98 and the present) and must include the photographer's name, telephone number and mailing address as well as information about the subject. No more than three entries per photographer. Entrants' income from photography must not exceed 25% of total income.

× Prints or slides are acceptable in black and white or color formats.

× Photos will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Send to Western People Photo Contest, Box 2500, Saskatoon, SK S7K 2C4.

× By entering this contest, entrants grant permission for their photos to be published in The Western Producer / Western People and used on our website or in promotional material. Staff of Western Producer Publications and their immediate family members are ineligible.

Entries must
be received by
Aug. 31,
2000

